

# Department of Human Services

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DHS Office of  
Communications  
(517) 373-7394



## Articles in Today's Clips Wednesday, February 14, 2007

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## Mom charged with killing tot

She's also accused of battering boy's twin

February 14, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A 33-year-old Detroit woman who regained custody of her twin babies from foster care by remaining drug free for several months was charged Tuesday with killing one of the twins.

Francina Shepherd, who has been in jail for three weeks on a first-degree child abuse charge in the battering of the surviving twin, was charged with first-degree murder and felony murder in the strangulation of the other, said Maria Miller, a spokeswoman for the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office.

Ulans Shepherd, age 16 months, was killed Jan. 22 in Shepherd's home in the 4200 block of Pennsylvania on Detroit's east side, investigators said. A police report filed in 36th District Court said Shepherd's female roommate found the boy not breathing and unresponsive in his crib the next day.

When EMS workers and police arrived, the roommate was holding Ulans' twin sister in her lap. The child's face was red and swollen, the police report said. She was taken to Children's Hospital of Michigan, where she was treated and released days later.

Officer Ben Biddle of the Detroit Police Child Abuse Unit wrote in the report that Shepherd confessed to hitting the children because they wouldn't stop crying and Ulans had soiled himself.

Shepherd said she hit Ulans "several times and, after he was unresponsive, she put him to bed," the report said.

Wayne County medical examiners ruled this week that the child was strangled.

Shepherd's grandmother, Francine Shepherd, said Tuesday that she often saw the family because they lived nearby.

"Why is she in jail?" asked Francine Shepherd, blaming "all that pressure that they put on her" to get a job before she could get the twins back.

"Every time she got a little part-time job with a temp service, she didn't have no babysitter," Francine Shepherd said.

Francina Shepherd has a documented history of drug abuse dating to January 2003, when she gave birth to a daughter who had cocaine in her system, according to Wayne County Family Court records.

Because Shepherd failed to get treatment for drug addiction, a judge terminated her parental rights to that child. Court records show that Shepherd's parental rights to two older children -- a girl now 16 and a boy now 10 -- also would have been terminated except that the children objected. They now live with relatives.

In March 2005, Francina Shepherd was using illegal drugs, according to court records, but quit when she found out she was pregnant with twins. The babies were born Sept. 13, 2005, and they and their mother tested negative for illegal drugs.

But because of her history, the state Department of Human Services placed the twins in a foster home supervised by Homes for Black Children of Detroit, and the DHS filed a petition to terminate Shepherd's rights to the twins.

In November 2005, then-Family Court Judge James A. Callahan denied the request to terminate her rights to the twins. Though Shepherd had missed several random drug screens, Callahan noted that she tested negative for illegal drugs that Oct. 7 and Nov. 3.

"There hasn't been any hard evidence to indicate that the mother has been abusing controlled substances since the beginning of March of this year," Callahan wrote in his order.

On Jan. 28, 2006, Callahan ordered that the twins be returned to their mother, citing her clean drug history and involvement with a family reunification program offered by the Judson Center of Royal Oak.

Callahan transferred to the court's criminal division last February, and another judge ended the court's jurisdiction over the twins in October.

On Tuesday, Callahan said he couldn't recall the case, but "I feel terrible about what happened to the children."

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or [jkresnak@freepress.com](mailto:jkresnak@freepress.com).

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## Detroit woman charged in twin son's strangling death

DETROIT -- A 33-year-old woman who regained custody of her twin babies from foster care by remaining drug free for several months has been charged in the strangling death of one of the twins.

Francina Shepherd of Detroit was charged Tuesday with first-degree murder and felony murder in the Jan. 22 death of 16-month-old Ulans Shepherd in her home. When officers arrived, his twin sister's face was red and swollen.

Shepherd had been in jail for three weeks on a first-degree child abuse charge related to the surviving twin, Maria Miller, spokeswoman for the Wayne County prosecutor's office, told the Detroit Free Press.

Shepherd has at least three other children who don't live with her. She lost parental rights to a daughter born in 2003 when she failed to get treatment after it was determined the girl had cocaine in her system, according to court records.

She acknowledged hitting the twins because they wouldn't stop crying and Ulans had soiled himself, police said. The boy was found not breathing and unresponsive in his crib by Shepherd's female roommate.

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## Fenton Township Woman Found Competent To Stand Trial For Child Abuse

Feb 13, 2007 05:18 PM EST

(TV5) -- A Fenton Township woman, charged with Child Abuse, has been found competent to stand trial.

Police say 18-year-old Jessica Lake and her boyfriend Christopher Rowand tried to leave Lake's daughter at Genesys Regional Medical Center last November. The girl was badly injured and a nurse called police.

Lake's attorney isn't saying much: "No comment. My client is innocent until proven guilty."

If convicted, Lake and her boyfriend could get 15 years in prison.



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## Too much blame on parents

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

VIENNA TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, February 13, 2007

By Joyce A. Panek

JOURNAL READER

When the parents of the late Rose Kelley were sentenced, where was the conclusive evidence of the homicidal murder of a child ["Equally to blame," Dec. 15, Page A1]?

Homicide was not a justifiable diagnosis for this crime. These parents were guilty of ignorance, poverty and disgrace, compounded by depressive circumstances. There was no physical abuse or mistreatment causing any injury to these children.

Roaches and lice are repulsive, disgusting pests that are capable of invading anyone's home. They cannot be blamed for contributing to the death of someone who had liver failure.

Did the parents' perspective account for anything? Rose's mom, Michelle L. Bowen, said she did not know Rose was that sick. Investigators said they did not seek medical help for her out of fear of the state from previous threats for failing to comply to their housekeeping rules. Their good judgment was superseded by dread of legal actions involving removal of their children. Were these parents sentenced on the homicidal abuse of their little loved one or for their deplorable, filthy helter-skelter home?

All the observers of these four little children's shameful living conditions should be convicted as accomplices. They chose to ignore and abandon this sad family's plight. Now, these too-late witnesses claim the children are thriving in foster care. But for their little hearts to be whole and thrive, they need the unconditional love of their own family - whether their homes are clean or filthy.

The parents' sentencing went beyond harsh. It was excessively brutal, callous and inhumane. They've already paid the ultimate penalty in the death of their little Rose. Please allow them to mourn.

Joyce A. Panek

Vienna Township

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## Man, 24, arraigned on sexual assault charges

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

Staff report

A parolee charged with raping a friend's 5-year-old daughter faces a preliminary examination Feb. 22.

On Tuesday, District Judge James Justin arraigned George L. McMonigal, 24, on counts of first- and second-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Records show McMonigal was paroled from prison on Oct. 10. Sheriff's investigators allege he was baby-sitting the girl on Jan. 18 in her Sandstone Township home when he raped her. The girl told her mother when she came home from work that afternoon, detectives said.

McMonigal was returned to prison for parole violation.

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# TheHawaiiChannel.com

5-Year-Old Lives Several Days With Mom's Body

## ***Woman Died Of Bacterial Meningitis***

POSTED: 1:58 pm HST February 13, 2007

**FRUITLAND TOWNSHIP, Mich.** -- Authorities in Muskegon County, Mich., said a 5-year-old girl took care of herself for days while she was home alone with her dead mother.

Police discovered the body of 39-year-old Tina Tietz on the couch of her Fruitland Township home on Sunday afternoon after a concerned friend called 911.

Preliminary autopsy results indicate that she died from bacterial meningitis.

Police also found the woman's daughter Marissa. She had been rummaging the house for food for an unknown number of days. The family dog was tied up inside.

The concerned friend last spoke with the mother eight days earlier when Tietz complained of a headache and ear pain. She said she went to the woman's home and heard the dog barking and the child crying, saying, "Mama's sleeping, Mama's sleeping."

Marissa was examined at a hospital and is now in the temporary custody of the Michigan Department of Human Services. The dog was taken to an animal-rescue organization.

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Michigan Report

February 13, 2007

## **FIRST VOTES OF 94<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATURE OCCUR IN SENATE**

Child care centers under investigation would have to notify all the parents of the children clients about the investigation under legislation which was the first passed by either chamber in the 94<sup>th</sup> Legislature.

The Senate unanimously passed [SB 97](#) and [SB 155](#) on Tuesday.

Both bills are aimed at preventing future situations such as that that occurred in Grand Rapids where investigations of a child care facility were conducted, and where the police discovered child pornography on the home computer of the owner of the facility but never notified the Department of Human Services. Had it done so, the department would have revoked the facility's license.

Under the bills, a facility that is under investigation by the department must notify the parents of all children who were in the facility at the time of an alleged incident under investigation.

The bills also make it a crime to make a false report of an incident to the state generating an investigation.



## State mandates Prevnar vaccines to deter disease in daycare centers

Saturday, February 13, 2007

By ERIN L

'HOTTA

Winter is here, noses are runny and daycare centers are in a dilemma.

The Michigan Department of Community Health recently established a new requirement that all children attending licensed daycare facilities must receive Prevnar, a pneumococcal conjugate vaccine that protects against pneumonia, bacterial meningitis, sinus infections and ear infections.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recently reported daycare attendance is associated with the risk of pneumococcal disease in children.

"We see a high degree of bacteria at daycare centers," said TJ Bucholz, communications director for the Michigan Department of Community Health. "It's very severe for children."

Deb Simmons, owner of Twinkle Toes Child Care in Kentwood, said there's always a fear of spreading disease.

"Nobody wants their kids to pick up illnesses," Simmons said. "But it's all part of daycare."

Simmons said many parents drop off their children after taking cold medicine at home. Four hours later the medicine wears off and the child has a sinus infection, which could potentially spread to other children at the daycare.

"If I knew they (had a sinus infection) that would cause me not to have them in daycare. It puts everyone at risk," Simmons said.

Pneumococcal disease is spread through respiratory droplets from the nose or mouth. Many children carry the disease in their throat without knowing.

"All day long kids are putting things in their mouth," said Alice Comrie, of Cascade Christian Child Care. "If something goes in the mouth it gets bleached."

"Some children's noses are running continuously," said Jamila Goldsmith, the assistant director of Alphabet Soup Day Care in Grand Rapids. "After wiping their noses we have sanitizer all around us."

Goldsmith said each child receives a personal blanket and keeps it in a plastic bag to prevent the spreading of disease through nose and mouth.

"We try to make sure we do everything we can to prevent disease, but we just can't worry about it," Goldsmith said.

The Michigan Department of Community Health notified licensed daycare facilities that children need Prevnar vaccines effective Jan. 1 to attend daycare. Prevnar is administered in a four-dose series given at two, four, six and 12-15 months. For previously unvaccinated older infants and children, there is a catch up schedule available.

Each week daycare facilities notify the MDCH of any pneumococcal disease as well as other illnesses

present among children attending their daycare.

"If the count (number of illnesses) is too high then they let us know if there's something we need to do," Goldsmith said.

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## Grant aimed at helping diabetics

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

By Jeff Alexander

**CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER**

A local health clinic for low-income and uninsured residents has received a \$473,038 grant to bolster efforts to control diabetes.

Novi-based Trinity Health, the parent company of Mercy General Health Partners, awarded the three-year grant to Muskegon Family Care in Muskegon Heights. Muskegon Family Care is a federally designated health clinic for low-income residents. Mercy General helped start Muskegon Family Care in 2001, but hospital officials said the clinic now is financially independent.

The clinic will use the grant to improve the treatment of diabetics and enhance efforts to prevent people from becoming diabetic.

"Helping patients control their diabetes is the focus of the grant," said Dr. Maureen Street, medical director at Muskegon Family Care. "This is really about helping people to control their own health -- giving them whatever tools they need to take control."

Diabetes is rampant in Muskegon County. The incidence of the disease and deaths caused by it here exceed the state and national averages, according to government data.

According to health statistics, 9.4 percent of Muskegon County adults have diabetes, and 4.5 percent of schoolchildren -- about 1,400 kids -- have been told they have the disease.

Studies have found that obesity contributes to Type II diabetes, also known as adult onset diabetes. About two-thirds of Muskegon County adults are overweight or obese, according to health data.

Street said the grant would help cover lab costs and provide glucometer strips or other supplies for diabetic patients.

"For many patients, it's all about education -- helping them manage their stress and their lives so that each day they're doing a little better," Street said. "Patients with poor diabetic control can develop problems associated with diabetes: coronary artery disease, renal failure, stroke and blindness."

Street said educating diabetics about how to manage their disease is a "dramatic change in how medical care is delivered at the health center."

The clinic recently began holding monthly support group meetings for diabetics, during which patients learn about the disease and how to deal with it.

"Our patients learn from each other what works and what doesn't work, and we're on hand with experts to answer their questions," Street said. "This is not about a physician telling them what to do, but about what will actually work for them in their lives."

Clinic officials said the grant would help diabetics like 56-year-old Howard Hoffman, who has battled the disease for 10 years. Hoffman said he only tests his blood sugar level once a day because he cannot afford to buy more glucometer testing strips.

"They say I make too much money to qualify for Medicaid, but I really can't afford my doctor visits, medicine and all the supplies I need for my diabetes," Hoffman said in a press release.

The grant will allow Muskegon Family Care to provide more diabetics with supplies they need to manage the disease. The clinic treats more than 700 diabetics, officials said.

Diabetes is the seventh-leading cause of death nationally and in Muskegon County, according to federal and local health data. Diabetes also can cause a variety of health complications, including heart disease, kidney failure, blindness and infections that lead to amputations.

Some people are born with diabetes. Others contract the disease later in life. The disease is caused by insulin deficiency or the body's inability to use insulin properly.

The body's inability to produce enough insulin or use the hormone properly prevents cells in the body from converting sugar to energy and properly storing fat. The result: sugar and fat remain in the bloodstream, where they can damage the body's vital organs.

The diabetes grant is part of Trinity Health's "Call to Care," a \$65 million initiative to improve health care for the uninsured and low-income residents in 31 communities where Trinity owns hospitals.

Working with Muskegon Family Care on the diabetes project is the Muskegon Community Health Project, a community health planning and advocacy organization for the uninsured and medically underserved. Health Project employees will work to identify possible diabetics in the community who might not know they have the disease.

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# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Bay County commissioners 'dumbfounded' over audit decision

Friday, February 09, 2007

By RYAN J. STANTON

**TIMES WRITER**

Bay County commissioners said this week they're "dumbfounded" with Bay Medical Care Facility for changing its auditing firm.

Leaders of the county's care facility apparently decided in November to pay \$19,300 for their 2006 audit, spending about \$12,000 more than planned to have Plante & Moran crunch the numbers instead of Rehmann Robson, the county's regular auditing firm.

In addition to expending those extra tax dollars, it's going to cost Bay County's own general fund an additional \$3,000 to have Rehmann Robson prepare a report to double check the figures from Plante & Moran, said County Board Chairman Kim Coonan.

Coonan, D-6th District, said he thinks the money should come from Bay Medical's budget, not the county's general fund.

Bay Medical Care, partly funded by county tax dollars, operates as a separate entity from county government, similar to the library system. It is governed by the Department of Human Services Board, whose members are appointed by county commissioners.

Brenda Burzynski, Bay Medical Care's administrator, said her board has nothing against Rehmann Robson, but Plante & Moran can perform an audit more suited to the care facility's needs.

"It's a completely different audit than what we're getting right now through Bay County," she said. "It's a different level of service and it provides us with a more in-depth analysis of what our Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement is. We're a longterm care facility and Plante & Moran has longterm care experience."

Bay Medical Care, founded in 1964, is a 206-bed longterm care facility located at 564 W. Hampton Road. It is funded by state and federal tax dollars, as well as a .5-mill county tax that makes up about 8 percent of its budget.

Burzynski, who was not at Tuesday's county board meeting when the debate occurred, said she didn't realize there would be an additional cost to the county to change audit firms. As far as Bay Medical Care picking up that cost, she said, that's something her board could consider.

Michael Regulski, the county's finance director, told commissioners on Tuesday that they have no choice but to accept Bay Medical Care's decision, because the county board has no authority over the Human Services Board.

Still, some commissioners questioned why the issue was just now being brought to their attention. County records show Burzynski wrote to Regulski on Dec. 8, informing him of the decision to change firms.

"We could have been notified a month ago," said Commissioner Donald Tilley, D-9th District.

According to county records, the base fee charged to Bay County by Rehmann Robson for performing the county's 2006 audit is \$81,800, of which the Drain Commission, MSU Extension and Library System each pick up a portion.

However, Bay Medical Care no longer will be paying its expected \$7,200 portion of the bill. Instead, that cost is wiped away, and the county will have to pull \$3,000 from its own general fund to pay for a new report replacing the Bay Medical portion of the audit.

That will increase the county's general fund costs for the audit from \$65,250 to \$68,250.

"I don't think we should pay any additional money," said Coonan.

Bay Medical Care, serving Bay County residents, provides skilled services such as nursing, physical therapy, speech therapy and rehabilitation. The facility's occupancy rate remains above 98 percent.

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## GPS for domestic abusers coming

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

**DARRYL Q. TUCKER**

**THE SAGINAW NEWS**

Domestic violence victims soon could receive electronic warnings when their abusers are nearby. Global positioning devices for offenders could work, Saginaw County officials say.

Mount Pleasant Republican state Rep. Bill Caul plans to sponsor legislation that would allow judges to require domestic violence offenders to wear GPS devices that send alerts to their victims.

"It has a lot of potential," said Valerie A. Hoffman, president and chief executive officer of Underground Railroad Inc., which provides shelter and advocacy for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

"It's a nice tool to increase their safety. Certainly, it may be a deterrent."

Caul decided to look into the legislation after the Jan. 9 slaying of Mary L. Babb outside the offices of the Morning Sun newspaper in Mount Pleasant, where she worked as an advertising representative.

Prosecutors charged Babb's estranged husband, 37-year-old Thomas D. Babb, an Evart subcontractor who installs tile in houses, with felony murder, an open count of murder, aggravated stalking, felonious assault with a vehicle, carrying a dangerous weapon with unlawful intent, possessing a firearm as a felon and possessing a firearm while committing a felony.

Mary Babb, 30, was dangling upside-down in a seat belt in her crashed sport utility vehicle when she suffered two shots to the chest from a 20-gauge shotgun, police said.

Isabella County Trial Judge William Rush has ordered Thomas Babb to undergo testing to determine if he is competent to stand trial and understands criminal responsibility.

Court officials said Tuesday they have not received a report on Babb's testing, so they have not set a preliminary hearing date.

Police said Mary Babb had obtained a personal protection order against her husband. Thomas Babb was free on bond after facing charges that he beat and sexually assaulted her.

Caul said the case provides evidence that personal protection orders and pending charges aren't strong enough deterrents in some instances. The GPS system is another tool to protect domestic violence victims and hopefully provide them with some comfort and peace of mind, he said.

Officials with the governor's office and House Democrats said this week they will review the legislation when Caul introduces it.

Saginaw County Chief District Judge Kyle Higgs Tarrant agrees GPS is a good tool in appropriate cases. In instances where a judge knows a person's life is in danger, if a person threatens to kill someone or when an assault has taken place based on a pattern from the past, the GPS is warranted, she said.

Tarrant said she wants to learn more about the bill: who will administer the system, and how much it will cost.

"In the end, you want to protect the victims the best way you can," Tarrant said.

The legislation would give judges discretion on whether to require defendants in domestic abuse cases to wear tethered GPS devices. A judge could order it as a condition of bail, Caul said.



Caul has not said how much the system would cost, but he indicated that defendants in cases where the technology is ordered would have to pay for it.

Saginaw County Family Court Judge Patrick J. McGraw endorses the potential legislation.

"It's a great idea, and I would love to have GPS for people I put on tether for personal protection order violations," he said. "That way I would make sure the person doesn't go to the residence or employment of the (victim).

"The problem is we don't have the money, and the people I want to put it on don't have the money" to pay for it either.

Saginaw attorney James F. Piazza said he wonders if it's constitutional to monitor someone with a GPS. "Why target these individuals charged with some type of domestic crimes and put them in a special category than everybody else?" Piazza asked.

A person facing armed robbery charges likely could have more rights than an individual facing a domestic violence case, he said.

"That does not make sense," Piazza said. v

Darryl Q. Tucker covers courts. You may reach him at 776-9686. The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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## THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

### **Reward offered in stalking case**

Man faces felony charge; police offer \$500 for information

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

Ann Arbor Police are offering a \$500 reward for information that leads to a 43-year-old man accused of stalking his former girlfriend for the past four months.

Lameo Dezombolis-Bey is charged with felony aggravated stalking and misdemeanor malicious use of a telephone.

Detective Laura Burke said Dezombolis-Bey dated a woman early last year for a short time, then began harassing and stalking her in October. She said he continues to stalk her, primarily over the phone.

Detective Sgt. Jim Stephenson said police don't know where Dezombolis-Bey lives, but he may be staying in the Ypsilanti area. Police have been searching for Dezombolis-Bey and have not been able to locate him, Stephenson said.

Dezombolis-Bey is 5 feet 11 inches tall, 215 pounds and has black hair and brown eyes. Anyone with information on Dezombolis-Bey's whereabouts is asked to call Burke at 734-996-3252 or the police tip line at 734-996-3199.

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Bay City Times

People's forum

Wednesday, February 14, 2007

## **Nathaniel Abraham**

Voice: Idella White, Bay City

This article is in response to the articles in The Bay City Times I have read about Nathaniel Abraham since he was placed here last summer.

I am appalled, disgusted and infuriated. If residents of Bay City have any compassion, empathy or hope for this young man, I am sure they are as confused as I am as to how he is going to survive here after reading the articles in the Jan. 28 paper. The front page article demeaned what dignity, character and self-esteem he may have had. He was depicted as lower than a human being, and to add insult to injury, they put in a colorful picture ridiculing his attire.

I don't condone what he did, nor do I condone the young guys who shot several Afro-Americans with an illegal weapon, and the guys who stole a car and gas that ended up in the death of Anthony Coleman. Why weren't there pictures and writeups about them?

In a conversation with the editor, I was told that the residents of Bay City have a right to know who is living in their environment. If that's true, let us know about all criminals. The editorial page was a repeat of the front-page article, under the title of giving Abraham a second chance. I didn't read anything positive that would lift the spirit of that young man. If he fails, give yourselves an A-plus, because you will have accomplished your goal.

He who is without sin, let him throw the first stone. You may not have used a gun, but your negative words and attitudes can end in the same result.

02/14/2007

## Convicted duo await sentencing

### *Seniors lost \$890,000 in 'Ponzi' scheme*

BY VICTOR SKINNER

[vskinner@record-eagle.com](mailto:vskinner@record-eagle.com)

TRAVERSE CITY — Gary Singer and Margaret Zimmerman couldn't have known they were selling a scam to local senior citizens, contends Gerald Chefalo, Singer's lawyer.

"I think they got in over their heads," Chefalo said. "It is just unfortunate. There is just no way they could have known this was a scam."

But the former principals of the local investment firm Estate Growth Management are to be sentenced Friday in 13th Circuit Court, regardless of whether they knew they were targeting seniors with an elaborate "Ponzi" scheme.

Circuit Court Judge Phillip Rodgers last year delayed for 11 months sentences for Singer and Zimmerman on their felony convictions. The goal: Give them a chance to repay their victims about \$890,000.

In a plea deal with the state attorney general's office, the couple each would be sentenced for one five-year felony if the money is paid in full. If they repaid at least \$100,000 combined, they each would be sentenced for one of their two 10-year felonies.

State law requires them to be sentenced within a year of their conviction or the court loses jurisdiction.

Assistant state Attorney General Scott Teter will push for "serious prison time" if restitution is not paid, said Matt Frendewey, spokesman for the state attorney general's office.

Zimmerman last made a payment of \$500 in January and has paid about \$5,750 in total restitution. Singer's last payment on Feb. 1 was for \$7,800, for a total of \$10,650 paid as of Tuesday.

One payment of \$203,095 was deposited in the Estate Growth Management account in June, according to circuit court records. The co-defendants are jointly liable for the \$890,000 in restitution.

Singer was convicted last year of two counts of false pretenses over \$20,000 and Zimmerman was convicted of one count of false pretenses over \$20,000 and one count of embezzling from a vulnerable adult. Estate Growth Management was convicted of embezzling from a vulnerable adult and uttering and publishing. Singer and Zimmerman convinced 14 victims in six counties to invest almost \$1 million in California-based companies that used the money to pay other investors.